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GALLERY

## SCENE & HERD

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Hope Alswang Named Director and CEO of Norton Museum

## Holland Tunnel

ROTTERDAM 02.16.10



Left: Artist Abner Preis at Art Rotterdam. Right: Artist Carsten Höller at the opening of his exhibition. (All photos: Cathryn Drake)

**THE ELEVENTH EDITION** of the Art Rotterdam fair took place in the armpit of the world's largest oil port, in the airy Holland-America Terminal, which gave it the jolly frisson of a harborside carnival. At Wednesday's preview, burly men in leather aprons served up juicy oysters and smoked herring by the barrels with an impressively choreographed professionalism. There was even a sideshow: American artist Abner Preis told stories from a colorful handmade stage set, like the heartwarming one about famous actor Timothy Teardrop, who finds happiness only after he saves a pigeon's life.

Before the doors even opened, Galerie Ron Mandos had sold a giant bust of twenty-four-year-old artist Levi van Veluw covered with a dazzling pattern in wooden marquetry to an Arnhem museum by telephone. "The local Dutch institutions always buy my artists here," said Frankfurt dealer Ulrike Adler, who had returned for her fourth year. The fair's seventy-six galleries offered an abundance of young talent in a relatively small space, and the whole thing was refreshingly all about commerce at a time when art fairs and exhibitions seem to be merging.

"Art fairs are becoming more curatorial and biennials more commercial," Art Rotterdam director Fons Hof noted. "This year, for example, Hedwig Fijen is working directly with collectors for Manifesta." Dealer Aaron Moulton, of Berlin's Feinkost, added: "I resent fair directors asking for specially produced exhibits that will be shown for only four days—like fast food, or a fake biennial. It is commercially unviable." Nevertheless Wilfried Lentz's curated booth, *Not Created by a Human Hand*, was a fascinating inquiry into issues of authorship with new work conceived by his artists, including Jonathan Monk, Dan Rees, and James Beckett, around a photograph of the Shroud of Turin.



Left: Aaron Moulton and Mette Ravnkilde Nielsen of Feinkost Gallery. Right: Rotterdam mayor Ahmed Aboutaleb with Art Rotterdam director Fons Hof.

Thursday evening was filled with downtown exhibition openings, including the show "Tales of the Unexpected," curated by María Rus Bojan and Radek Vana, at newly opened multidisciplinary space Dek 22. Artists Rossella Biscotti and Kevin van Braak weighed statues of four key Communist figures, melted down the equivalent amounts in metal, and then compressed them into minimalist geometric forms. It brought to mind Rotterdam itself, a city whose dynamic urban energy stems from its constant state of renewal, in part due to its devastation during World War II. The scrappy little brother to natty Amsterdam has the avant-grunge character of Berlin and a lot more happening in contemporary art than the staid capital. As we stood outside in the cold, Moulton exclaimed, "Rotterdam is the most futuristic city in Europe!" And with that we invaded the MKgalerie to see "As Time Goes By," a beautiful show of photographs evoking anonymous but emotionally charged places—mirrored by one of the same six artists in the gallery's Berlin space—after which everyone was invited upstairs to feast on Indonesian food cooked by dealer Karmin Kartowikromo in his cozy home.

On Friday there was an official dinner at the historic city hall, one of few prewar buildings still standing, hosted by Rotterdam's Moroccan-born mayor, Ahmed Aboutaleb. After a speech in which Aboutaleb proudly plugged his contribution as a curator in the Kunsthal show "Inside Out," which displays the entire contents of Boijmans van Beuningen museum's warehouse, everyone partook in a robust buffet including potato and salmon salads and lots of roast meat. "Hey, is that Viktor and Rolf leaving?" someone yelled—

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All rights reserved. and with that we all dispersed for the opening of Carsten Höller's exhibition "Divided Divided," at the Boijmans museum.



While guests wandered like tiny Alices in a roomful of gigantic mushrooms, the artist stood at the mouth of the aluminum *Swinging Spiral*, whose nautilus-shaped interior induces disorientation and seasickness the farther you enter. "I can't stand here anymore. It unbalances me," Höller said, and moved away. Speaking of the intersection of commerce and art, the exhibition's *Revolving Hotel Room* was already fully booked except for one night, which is being auctioned off with a starting bid of €450 (around \$600). "Imagine paying that much and then having to tiptoe downstairs and across the entire museum in your towel to take a shower," joked one cynic. After a drink downstairs, Moulton and some other dealers went off to party at the retro wood-paneled bar of the Grand Hotel Central, nightly haunt for the concurrent International Film Festival Rotterdam.



Left: Lorenzo Benedetti, director of the De Vleeshal museum, and dealer Wilfried Lentz. Right: Artist Hidde van Schie performing at B.a.d.

That next night was another marathon art tour, this time around the newly developing scene of Rotterdam Zuid, a peripheral lower-class neighborhood that is being gentrified by an invasion of artists and galleries. We started at a former school inhabited by the artist initiative B.a.d., where after studio visits and concerts by artist Hidde van Schie and a tranced-out Nina Boas, we crawled through a dark space below a wooden structure and emerged into a smoky room where a jazz trio was playing. After a theatrical performance at Art Plaat and stops at galleries on the charming redbrick Wolphaertstraat, the elaborate system of scheduled shuttles broke down. We took things into our own hands and hitched a ride to performance space De Player, under the rumbling tracks of the Metro, and then ended another night at the Grand Hotel Central.

By dusk the next day, the city was layered with every possible tonality of gray and nuance of fog; it took on a painterly intimacy, with its profusion of towers and cranes lighting up like effulgent beacons against the horizon. I arrived at the Hilton late that night and met up with a crowd of dealers celebrating the fair's finish, gluttons for punishment who had sampled the local herb and were looking far too mellow. "Want a shot of whiskey?" one asked cheerfully. It was the beginning, and the end, of another long night.

— Cathryn Drake



Left: Dealers Gabriel Rolt, Christina Wilson, Juliette Jongma, and Diana Stigter. Right: Hoessein Bouziane and Pim Top of Dek 22.



Left: Curator Mariana Canepa Luna, artist Hans Schabus, and curator Max Andrews. Right: Dealers Ulrike Adler and Karmin Kartowikromo.

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Left: Artist Daniel Jackson, Lautom's Bjorn-Kowalski Hansen, and Aaron Moulton. Right: Artist Jeroen Kuster at Kunst & Complex studios.



Left: Lars Grambye of Kunsthallen Brandts, Manifesta's Hedwig Fijen, and dealer Christina Wilson. Right: Loek Spoomaker of Galerie Delta and Georg Bak of LGT at De Player.



Left: Arjan van Dal of UNESCO and collector Agnes Rein. Right: Artists Wouter Osterholt, Elke Uitentuis, and Dario D'Aronco.